The Mystery of Jane

Or, The Husband of Jane Baldwin

In the 1850 United States census, a woman named Jane Baldwin appears as a head of household in Walker County, Texas with 12 other individuals aged 20 and under[1]. The 14 year old child named Frankin (Franklin) is my 3rd great-grandfather. Presumably, Jane Baldwin is my 4th great-grandmother. But, who is her husband and where is he?

The Mystery of Jane

Jane is one of the most mysterious figures in the family tree. Her story is, on the surface, one with a lot of missing pieces. We might begin with her appearance in the 1850 United States Census. She is an illiterate widow, born in Ohio, with (apparently) 12 children (two sets of twins). By the birth dates of her youngest children, her husband died between 1847 and 1850. By the birth dates and places of her children, she and her husband emigrated with their children from Illinois to the Republic of Texas between 1836 and 1838 (making Jane and her first 10 children citizens of the Republic of Texas). Very little is known about many of the children, but at least 5 of them have well-traced family trees.

William D. Baldwin

It is my belief that a man named William D. Baldwin is the best candidate for her husband. William D. Baldwin first appears in the 1830 United States Census in Illinois. He appears to be married and has 1 son and 2 daughters. We next find him fighting in the Black Hawk War in 1831-1832[5, 6].

William next appears in Texas receiving a 3rd class conditional land grant for 640 acres (meaning he is married) in Jasper County on 03 Jan 1840[7, 8]. Information in these documents show he immigrated to the Republic of Texas in Jan 1838 which aligns perfectly with the dates implied by Jane's children. He also appears on the Jasper County 1840 tax roll paying a $1.00 poll tax[9, 10].

On 04 Jul 1842, William D. Baldwin receives the unconditional certificate for his 640 acre land grant in Washington County[7, 11]. The primary signer of the certificate is a man named J. C. Thomas. The certificate states that William has been in the Republic of Texas for at least 3 years.

William next appears in Washington County, Texas on the 1843 tax roll[13]. Then on 04 Sep 1843 he makes the unusual move of giving a power of attorney to a man names James H. Holt concerning his land grant[12]. Mr. Holt is given full authority to sell the land. Since we find William in Grimes County next in 1846[14, 15, 16], presumably he was leaving the area and left someone in charge to eventually dispose of the land for him. Note the mention of J. C. Thomas (and a Pheba Baldwin) in this power of attorney document as being present before the land commissioners with William on 04 Jul 1842 when he received the unconditional certificate.

On 11 Nov 1844, William Baldwin is seen founding the Rocky Creek Baptist Church in Grimes County, Texas, with J. C. and Louisa Thomas[48].

Some time in this period, William is a witness to a John C. Thomas land sale.

On 27 Jul 1847, William's land grant is surveyed and placed in Nueces County[17].

From 1846 to 1848 William D. Baldwin appears on the Grimes County tax rolls[14, 15, 16]. None of them indicate he had much of anything, and no deed records for William have been found in Grimes or Montgomery County (from which Grimes was formed in 1846). He is always seen paying a small tax with no land, horses, cattle, etc. It is not known why he is in Grimes County now, why he is not living on his land in Nueces County, and where he is living or who he is living with in Grimes County. (Is he living with John C. Thomas?)

During the 1846 to 1848 period William also appears on the Nueces County tax rolls[18, 19, 20]. This is probably solely due to the fact that he is a land owner in the county. Since he is paying a poll tax in Grimes County in these years, he is likely living in Grimes County.

The next we see of William he has died in Grimes County. His estate is in probate in June 1849[21]. John C. Thomas is requesting and receives Letters of Administration at the request of the unnamed widow (remember Jane was illiterate and likely would not have been able to represent herself). No other mention of the estate probate has been found. The location of William's grave is not known. It should also be noted here that J. C. Thomas does indeed appear in the 1850 United States Census in Grimes County[22]. He is with a woman named Louisa.

Jane Baldwin

And so picks up the story of Jane. She appears in the 1850 United States Census in Walker County as an illiterate widow with 12 children[1]. Why would she be connected to William? It is the subsequent events in her life that bear this out.

The land she is living on in 1850 is the one labor of land bought from Daniel B. McMahon (granted to him via Certificate #22, 1st Class, 14 Mar 14 1839) on 21 Dec 1849[23]. The land was 14 miles N 64°W of Huntsville, Texas. Note that this is quite close to the Grimes County line. It is not known where in Texas the family was living prior to this. Importantly, note that John C. Thomas is a witness to this land purchase.

Jane Baldwin is seen on the 1851 and 1852 Walker County tax rolls living on the land purchased from McMahon[24, 25]. She does not appear on the 1853 tax roll.

William D. Baldwin's 640 acre land grant in Nueces County is sold on 28 Mar 1853 in Washington County, Texas[26]. The land is sold by his attorney James H. Holt (via the 04 Sep 1843 Power of Attorney) to George W. Gentry. Since we see Jane on the move shortly after this (see below), it is possible the income from this sale allowed her some freedom.

In 1854, Jane Baldwin is seen in Leon County (near the Limestone County line) as a founding member of the Little Flock Baptist Church[27]. How do we know this is our Jane? In the 1860 United States Census the Jane Baldwin family is living on the edge of Limestone County near the Leon County line[2] (her children Franklin[29] and Arminda[2] are living nearby, separately). Three other founders of the church are living near her (Cothern, Lamb, and Stapleton). And, the church and cemetery are also in this area. So, surely this is Jane. Note also that J. C. and Louisa Thomas are also founding members of the church. In the 1860 census they are found living in Bear Grass, Texas in Leon County near the Limestone County line in the general area of the Little Flock Baptist Church[28].

On 05 Aug 1854 the future buyer of Jane's Walker County land (William Robinson) writes a letter concerning the patent for the land to "Mr. Tomas"[30]. On the back of the letter the words "Favor of Franklin Baldwin" can be seen. (Benjamin Franklin Baldwin, Sr., who went by the name Franklin, is Jane's son.) Again we see Mr. Thomas connected to Jane Baldwin. And, it appears that a deal to sell Jane's Walker County land was in the works as early as 1854.

On 23 Nov 1858 Jane receives a patent for the Walker County land bought from (and originally granted to) D. B. McMahon[31, 32]. She finally sells this land on 13 Oct 1859[33], almost exactly a decade after she bought it. It is important to note here that John C. Thomas is the notary public for this sale (in Bear Grass, Texas where he resides in the 1860 census).

The last we see of Jane Baldwin she is living with her son Francis Marion Baldwin in Limestone County in the 1870 United States census[3]. It is not known when she died or where she is buried.

John Covington Thomas

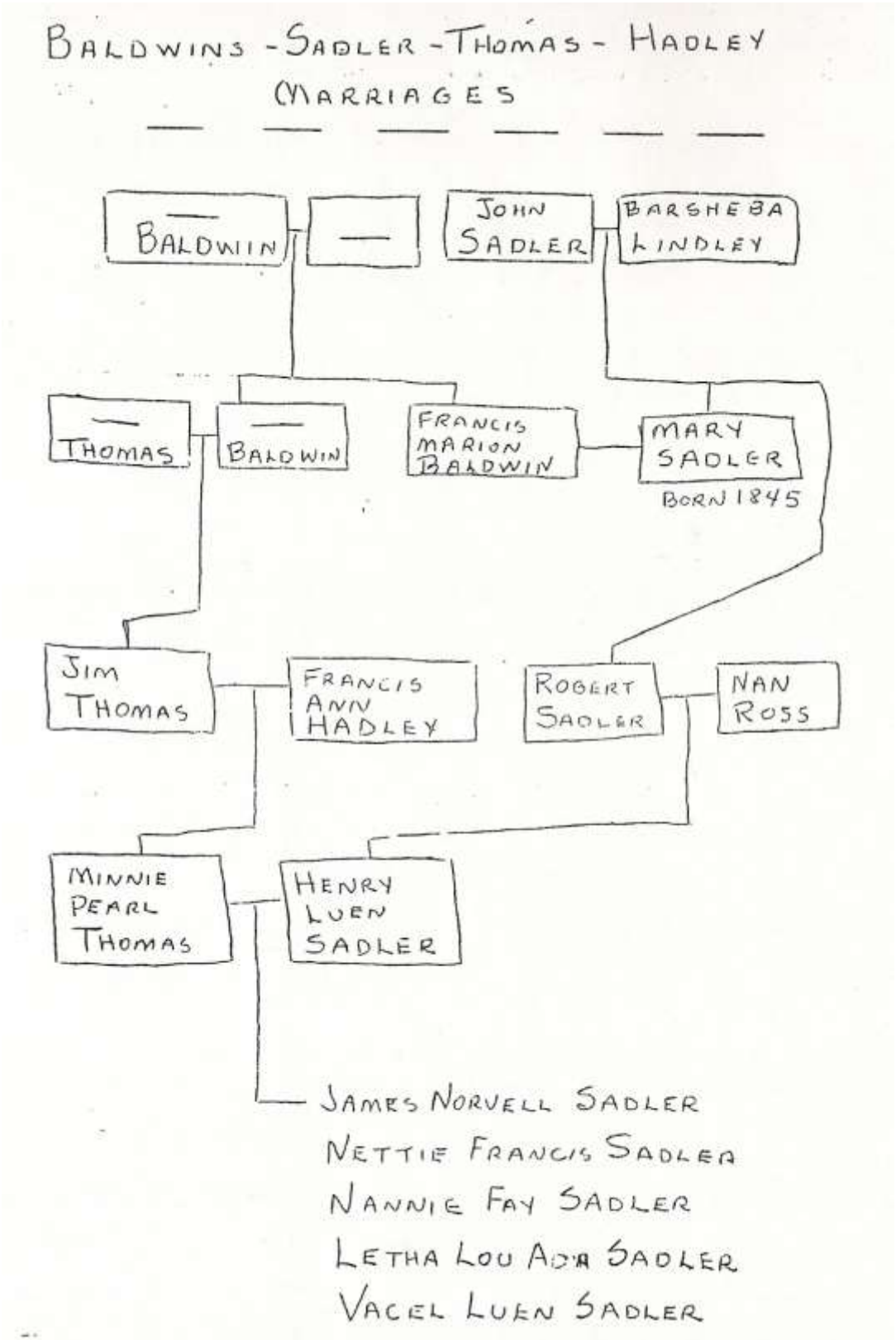
The constant theme of this story is John C. Thomas. The theory, which is strongly supported by many of the facts, is that his wife Louisa is the eldest child of William and Jane Baldwin (so John is a son-in-law). According to the 1850 and 1860 United States censuses, Louisa was born in Illinois in 1826. This is the right time and the right place. She would be one of the two girls under 5 in the 1830 census (the son is probably Allen M. and the other daughter could very well be Mary if her and Allen's birth dates are slightly off in the 1850 census).

The Thomas' repeated presence with William and/or Jane from 1842 to at least 1859 (and through a move from Grimes to the Leon/Limestone County area) is a strong indicator of family ties.

Louisa (Baldwin) Thomas

So, the key element of the mystery of Jane is to establish that Louisa, the wife of John Covington Thomas, is the first child of William and Jane. There is one piece of evidence to this mystery that we have not discussed yet that should give great weight to this argument.

In 1963, a man named Clarence W. Roberson, Jr. of Terrell, Texas produced an unpublished booklet on the family history of his wife, Nannie Fay Sadler, called “The Samuel Washington Lindley Family.” Nannie was a great-granddaughter of John Covington Thomas. In this booklet, a pedigree chart was included on page 49 to illustrate several Baldwin and Lindley marriages in the family tree. This chart is shown on the following page.



Pedigree of Nannie Fay Sadler, great-granddaughter of John Covington Thomas,
as presented by her husband Clarence W. Roberson, Jr. of Terrell, Texas,
in his booklet “The Samuel Washington Lindley Family” (1963), page 49

Nannie's great-grandfather surnamed Thomas is shown as married to a Baldwin. A little work is needed to identify this Thomas and his wife, but the trail is easily followed with census records and Texas death records to arrive at none other than John C. and Louisa Thomas, the couple who are the common thread in the Jane Baldwin narrative.

There are four reasons why I think great weight should be given to this piece of secondary evidence. First, as I have researched the other content of this pedigree chart, it contains no mistakes. All of the other parent-child relationships and marriages can be proven to be correct. This does not prove the Thomas-Baldwin marriage to be correct, but it gives a high degree of assurance that it is correct.

Second, as stated by my distant cousin Cathy Magleby, Clarence Roberson's booklet contains the only known complete listing of children of Francis Marion Baldwin and Mary Sadler. Therefore, he and his family had access to specific information about the Baldwin family history that no longer exists. It is logical to believe this information extended to Francis' proposed sister Louisa in the pedigree chart.

It should be noted here that three of Francis Marion Baldwin and Mary Sadler's children were alive in 1960 when the Roberson's began their research. So, it is quite possible they had conversations with nieces and nephews of Louisa. This could also be where Clarence had access to a reported Francis Marion Baldwin Bible to compile the birth dates of Francis and Mary's children.

Third, the purpose of the given pedigree chart is to illustrate a somewhat complicated set of marriages and family relations between the Lindley, Sadler, Thomas, and Baldwin families. If it were a simple pedigree chart, Mary Sadler and Francis Marion Baldwin would not have been included. The fact that they were included indicates there was specific, relevant information to the purpose of this chart. That information was another Baldwin marriage into the Lindley-Sadler family that also connected to Thomas family.

Fourth, as I have analyzed the life spans of everyone from Nannie Sadler to Jane Baldwin, there is much overlap in their life spans. Part of what we are considering here is how close this report is to Jane Baldwin and Louisa Thomas and how much discontinuity has occurred in the family that would interrupt or corrupt the flow of family history information. Consider the following:

- Jane Baldwin lived past 1870 in Limestone County.
- John and Louisa Thomas probably both died before 1870 in Leon County.
- Children of John and Louisa Thomas lived from 1843 until 1934, in the latter years in Limestone County.
- Children of James "Jim" Hamilton Thomas (grandchildren of John and Louisa) lived from 1871 (in Leon-Madison-Limestone counties until at least 1900) until 1965 (two of them in Terrell, Texas in the latter years). Specifically, Nannie's mother Minnie Pearl Thomas lived until 1957 in Terrell.
- Nannie Fay Sadler was born in 1909.
- Nannie's husband begins compiling family history info in Jan 1960 from Terrell, Texas.

With so much overlap and virtually all of these families remaining in relatively close proximity well into the 20th century, the situation was conducive for sharing and communication of family history.

Therefore, I am quite comfortable with the conclusion that Louisa is a sister of Francis Marion Baldwin and a child of Jane Baldwin. Despite the lack of primary evidence, I think we have likely established the truth. I believe the Baldwin family history developed by Clarence Roberson was done on a firm foundation and is reliable.

Finally, it is important to note that there were very few Baldwins in Texas in the 1840s. If indeed the maiden name of Louisa Thomas was Baldwin, and there is close geographical proximity and interaction between the families of John C. Thomas and Jane Baldwin throughout the 1840s and 1850s, the likelihood of Louisa being the daughter of William D. and Jane Baldwin is very high.

Conclusion

The best I can conclude is that William D. Baldwin is indeed the husband of the Jane Baldwin seen in the 1850 United States census in Walker County, Texas. The only other documented Baldwin that arrived in Texas in time to have a child by 1838 is a James R. Baldwin. However, his conditional and unconditional land grants are in Bexar County, Texas which would place the family far from the eventual location of Walker County, Texas. This decreases the likelihood that this is the right man to be Mr. Baldwin.

Jane's maiden name and parentage are unknown. With her sudden appearance on the scene in the 1850 census, little can be gathered of her early life and family.

(Many thanks to Cathy Magleby of Lindon, Utah for providing much information and documentation that went into constructing this story about Jane Baldwin.)

References:

[1] 1850 United States Census. Walker County, Texas, Pages 256 A and 256 B.
[2] 1860 United States Census. Limestone County, Texas, Page 335 A.
[3] 1870 United States Census. Limestone County, Texas, Page 198 B.
[4] 1830 United States Census. Fulton County, Illinois, Page 249 A.
[5] Whitney, Ellen M., The Black Hawk War 1831-1832, Volume 1 - Illinois Volunteers, Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield, 1970. Page 455.
[6] Ibid. Page 190.
[7] White, Gifford, 1840 Citizens of Texas, Volume 1, Land Grants, Austin, Texas, 1983. Page 12.
[8] Texas State Archives: Records of the Texas General Land Office. File 85, San Patricio, 3rd Class, William D. Baldwin. James H. Holt Deposition. Front Back.
[9] Tax Records of Jasper County, Texas. Tax roll for 1840, page ?.
[10] White, Gifford, 1840 Citizens of Texas, Volume 2, Tax Rolls, Austin, Texas, 1984. Page 87.
[11] Texas State Archives: Records of the Texas General Land Office. File 85, San Patricio, 3rd Class, William D. Baldwin. Unconditional Certificate (#25). Front Back.
[12] Ibid. Power of Attorney. Page 1 Page 2 Page 3 Page 4.
[13] Tax Records of Washington County, Texas. Tax roll for 1843, page 14-1.
[14] Tax Records of Grimes County, Texas. Tax roll for 1846, Page 1.
[15] Ibid. Tax roll for 1847, Page ?.
[16] Ibid. Tax roll for 1848, Page ?.
[17] Texas State Archives: Records of the Texas General Land Office. File 85, San Patricio, 3rd Class, William D. Baldwin. Land grant survey. Page 1 Page 2 Page 3.
[18] Tax Records of Nueces County, Texas. Tax roll for 1846, page 2 (unmarked).
[19] Ibid. Tax roll for 1847, page 12 (unmarked).
[20] Ibid. Tax roll for 1848, page 3 (unmarked).
[21] Minutes of the County Court of Grimes County, Texas. Book 2, Page 90.
[22] 1850 United States Census. Grimes County, Texas, Page 382 A.
[23] Texas State Archives: Records of the Texas General Land Office. File 459, Montgomery, 1st Class, Daniel B. McMahon. Land sale to Jane Baldwin. Page 1 Page 2 Page 3.
[24] Tax Records of Walker County, Texas. Tax roll for 1851, Page ?.
[25] Ibid. Tax roll for 1852, Page ?.
[26] Texas State Archives: Records of the TX GLO. File 85, San Patricio, 3rd Class, William D. Baldwin. Land grant sale.
[27] Minutes of the Twelfth Annual Session of the Trinity River Association of United Baptists (1859), Texas Baptist Power Press Print, 1860. Page 22.
[28] 1860 United States Census. Leon County, Texas, Page 283 B.
[29] 1860 United States Census. Limestone County, Texas, Page 335 B.
[30] Texas State Archives: Records of the Texas General Land Office. File 459, Montgomery, 1st Class, Daniel B. McMahon. Letter from William Robinson to "Mr. Tomas" re: land patent. Front Back.
[31] Texas State Archives: Records of the Texas General Land Office. Land patent records. Volume 13, Number 325.
[32] Walker County, Texas Deed Records. Book P, Page 273.
[33] Ibid. Book P, Pages 274 and 275.
[34] Marriage Records of Walker County, Texas. Volume 5, Page 246.
[35] Minutes of the Probate Court of Walker County, Texas. Book G, Page 123.
[36] Vick-Rainey, Mary E., Marriage Records of Walker County, Texas 1846-1880, 1978. Page 13.
[37] Mearse, Linda, Confederate Indigent Families Lists of Texas, 1863-1865, 1995. Page 280.
[38] Walker County, Texas Cemeteries, Volume 2, North Walker County, Walker County Genealogical Society, Huntsville, TX, 2004. Page 99, McAdams Cemetery.
[39] B. F. Baldwin, Jr. Bible. Owned by Benjamin Franklin Baldwin. Jr. and Clara Ann Clarke. "Memoranda" page.
[40] Ibid. "Deaths" page.
[41] Ibid. "Marriages" page.
[42] Vick-Rainey, Mary E., Marriage Records of Walker County, Texas 1846-1880, 1978. Page 19.
[43] Loftin, Jack and Marie, Complete Cemetery Census of Young County, Texas 1837-1995, 1995. Page 85.
[44] 1870 United States Census. Limestone County, Texas, Pages 198 A and 198 B.
[45] Bounds, Virginia J. and Imogene C. Barham, Limestone County, Texas, Cemetery Surveys, Volume 1, Part 1, Limestone County Historical Museum, 1988. Page 168, Ferguson Cemetery.
[46] Death Records of Robertson County, Texas. Volume 1, page 8.
[47] Marriage Records of Walker County, Texas. Volume 2, Page 767.
[48] Boulet, Joseph Eugene. Baptist Churches of Grimes County – Volume 1: Churches Organized Prior to the Civil War, Anderson, Texas, 1936, page 4 (minutes of organization of the Rocky Creek Baptist Church, 11 Nov 1844).